

If I do ... and If I did ...

A

Compare these examples:

(1) Lisa has lost her watch. She tells Sue:

LISA: I've lost my watch. Have you seen it anywhere?

SUE: No, but if I find it, I'll tell you.

In this example, Sue feels there is a real possibility that she will find the watch. So she says: if I find ... , I'll ...

(2) Joe says:

If I found a wallet in the street, I'd take it to the police station.

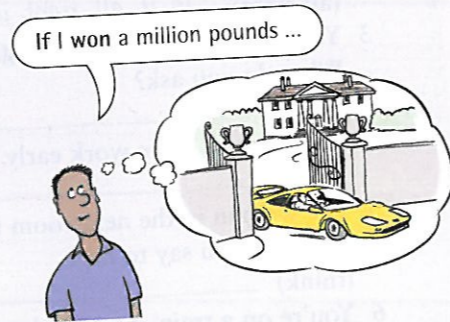
This is a different type of situation. Here, Joe doesn't expect to find a wallet in the street; he is *imagining* a situation that will probably not happen. So he says: if I found ... , I'd (= I would) ... (not if I find ... , I'll ...)

When you imagine something like this, you use *if + past* (if I found / if there was / if we didn't etc.).

But the meaning is *not past*:

- What would you do if you won a million pounds? (we don't really expect this to happen)
- I don't really want to go to their party, but I probably will go. They'd be upset if I didn't go.
- If there was (or were) an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?

For *if ... was/were*, see Unit 39C.



B

We do not normally use *would* in the *if*-part of the sentence:

- I'd be very frightened if somebody pointed a gun at me. (not if somebody would point)
- If I didn't go to their party, they'd be upset. (not If I wouldn't go)

But you can use *if ... would* when you ask somebody to do something:

- (from a formal letter) I would be grateful if you would let me know your decision as soon as possible.

C

In the other part of the sentence (not the *if*-part) we use *would* ('d) / *wouldn't*:

- If you took more exercise, you'd (= you would) feel better.
- I'm not tired. If I went to bed now, I wouldn't sleep.
- Would you mind if I used your phone?

Could and *might* are also possible:

- If you took more exercise, you might feel better. (= it is possible that you would feel better)
- If it stopped raining, we could go out. (= we would be able to go out)

D

Do not use *when* in sentences like those on this page:

- They'd be upset if I didn't go to their party. (not when I didn't go)
- What would you do if you were bitten by a snake? (not when you were bitten)

Will → Units 21–22 If and when → Unit 25D Would → Unit 36 If I knew → Unit 39
If I had known → Unit 40

38.1 Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 They would be offended if I didn't go to their party. (not / go)
- 2 If you took more exercise, you would feel better. (feel)
- 3 If they offered me the job, I think I it. (take)
- 4 A lot of people would be out of work if the car factory (close down)
- 5 If I sold my car, I much money for it. (not / get)
- 6 (in a lift) What would happen if somebody that red button? (press)
- 7 I don't think there's any chance that Gary and Emma will get married. I'd be absolutely astonished if they (do)
- 8 Liz gave me this ring. She very upset if I lost it. (be)
- 9 Dave and Kate are expecting us. They would be very disappointed if we (not / come)
- 10 Would Steve mind if I his bike without asking him? (borrow)
- 11 What would you do if somebody in here with a gun? (walk)
- 12 I'm sure Sue if you explained the situation to her. (understand)

38.2 You ask a friend to imagine these situations. You ask *What would you do if ... ?*

- 1 (imagine – you win a lot of money)
What would you do if you won a lot of money?
- 2 (imagine – you lose your passport)
What
- 3 (imagine – there's a fire in the building)
.....
- 4 (imagine – you're in a lift and it stops between floors)
.....

38.3 Answer the questions in the way shown.

- 1 A: Shall we catch the 10.30 train?
B: No. (arrive too early) If we caught the 10.30 train, we'd arrive too early.
- 2 A: Is Kevin going to take his driving test?
B: No. (fail) If he
- 3 A: Why don't we stay at a hotel?
B: No. (cost too much) If
- 4 A: Is Sally going to apply for the job?
B: No. (not / get it) If
- 5 A: Let's tell them the truth.
B: No. (not / believe us) If
- 6 A: Why don't we invite Bill to the party?
B: No. (have to invite his friends too)
.....

38.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

- 1 If you took more exercise, you'd feel better.
- 2 I'd be very angry if
- 3 If I didn't go to work tomorrow,
- 4 Would you go to the party if
- 5 If you bought some new clothes,
- 6 Would you mind if